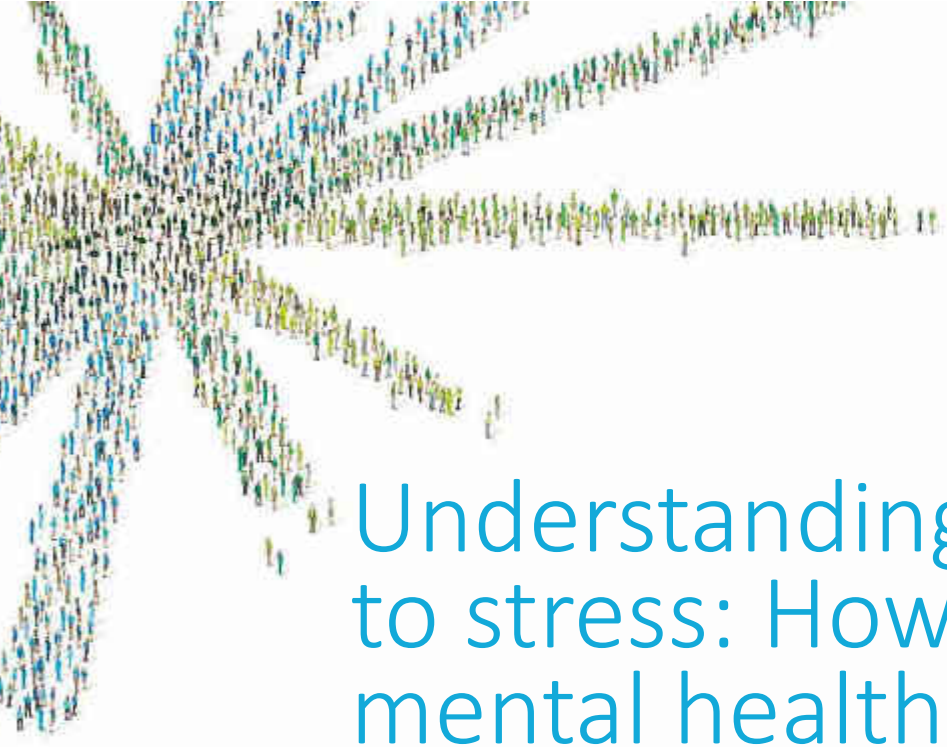

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Commission de la santé mentale du Canada

Understanding our brain's reaction to stress: How to adopt positive mental health hygiene habits

Dr. Bill Howatt
Chief Research & Development Officer, Workforce Productivity
Morneau Shepell

April 26, 2017 / 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. ET

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#FirstResponders
#MentalHealth

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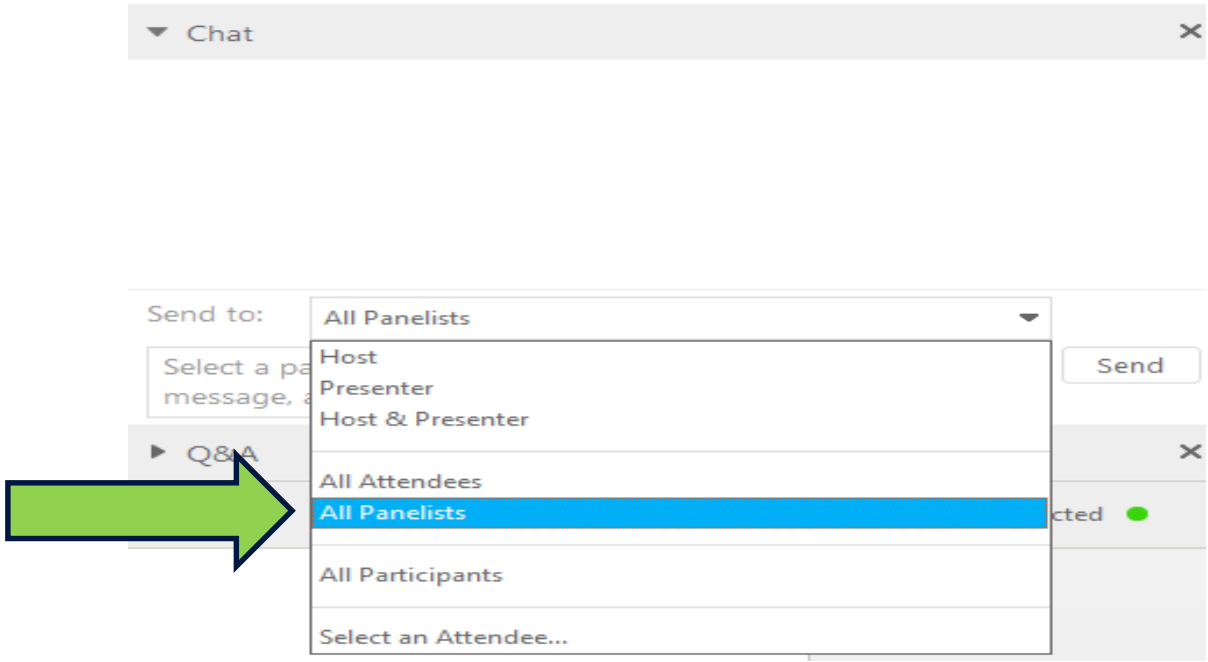
Important! Send questions/comments to ‘All Panelists’



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Presenter

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Understanding our brain's reaction to stress: How to adopt positive mental health hygiene habits

Dr. William Howatt

April 27, 2017

Mental health in the workplace

1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime

One of the root problems of mental illness is the fact that those with an illness are not disclosing their issue

1/3 get treatment

Who are the one out of five?

- The motivation behind this award is to give employees and their organizations a unique perspective on the total health: **physical, mental, work and life.**

www.employeerecommended.com

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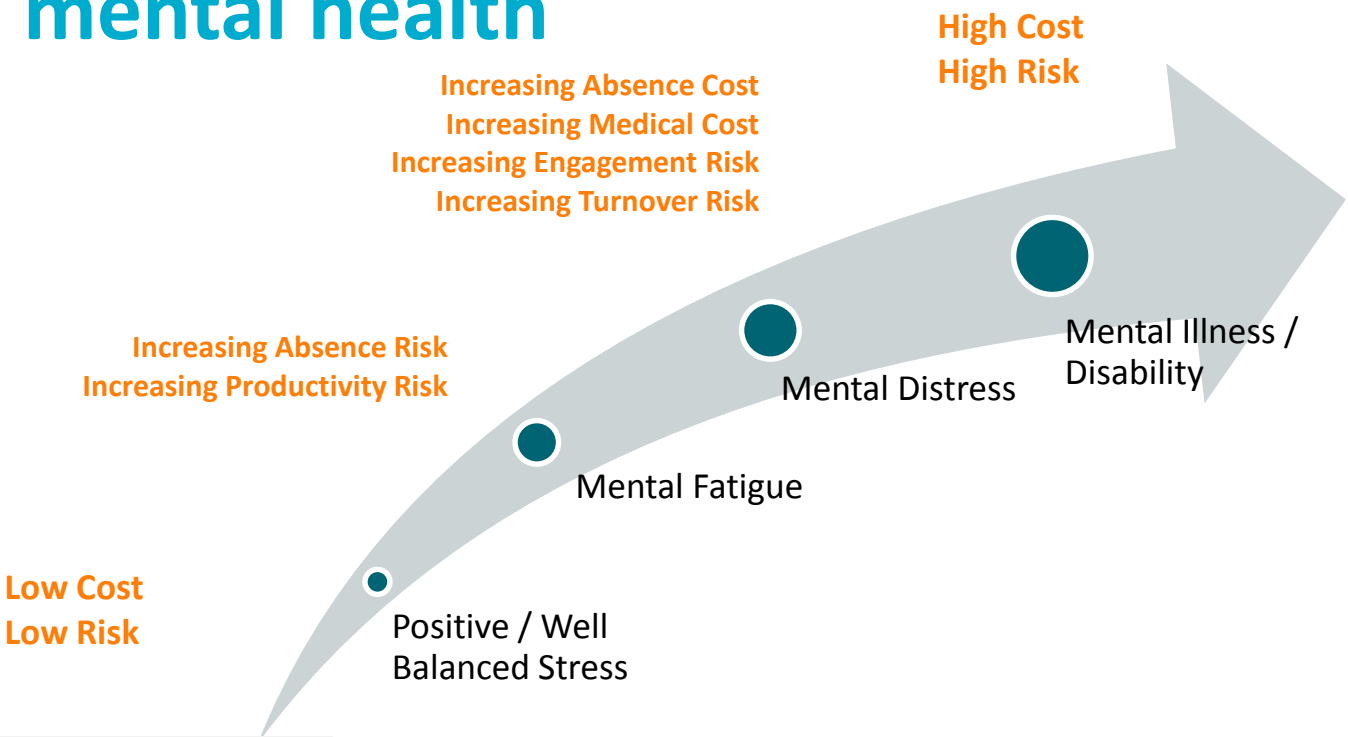
The conventional view: A continuum of mental health



- Poor Health
- Increased Incidental Absence
- Increased STD / LTD Cost
- Reduced Productivity
- Reduced Performance
- Reduced Effectiveness & Engagement
- Increased Turnover

- Good Health
- Low Absence
- Limited STD / LTD
- Highly Productive
- Achievement Oriented Performance
- Positive Engagement
- Low Turnover

- The conventional thinking is that people start healthy and decline to the point of requiring medical intervention
- Workplace initiatives need to recognize that needs fluctuate over time – “1 in 5 Canadians” every year does not equal a static 20%

Stress

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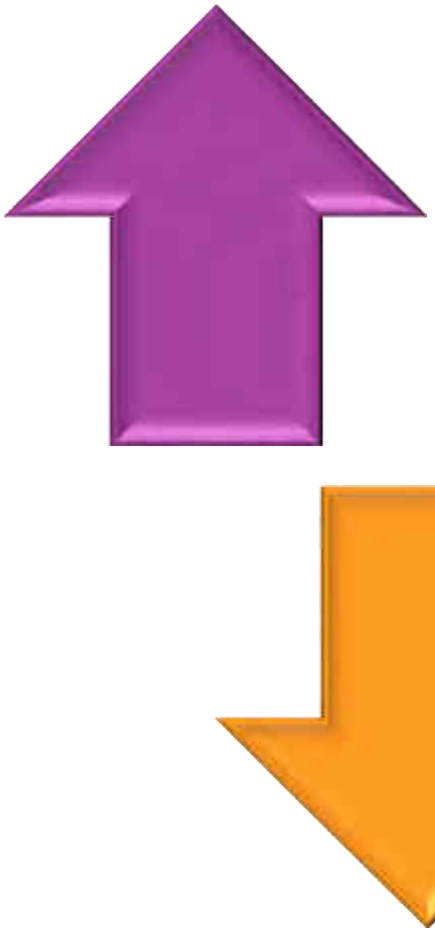
Stress/strain relationship suggests…

… the higher ones' stress load, the higher the health risk



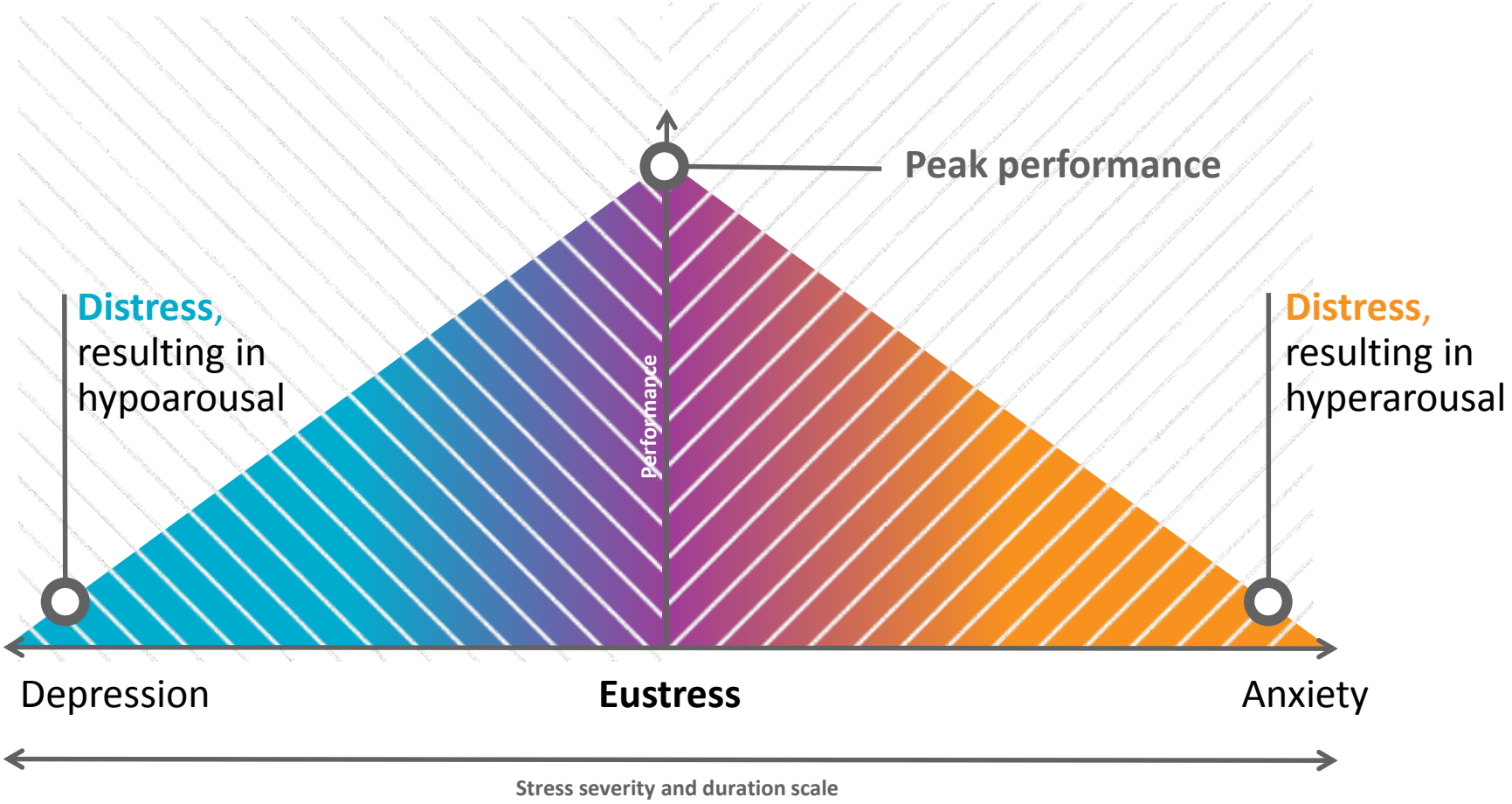
Stress Load

Health

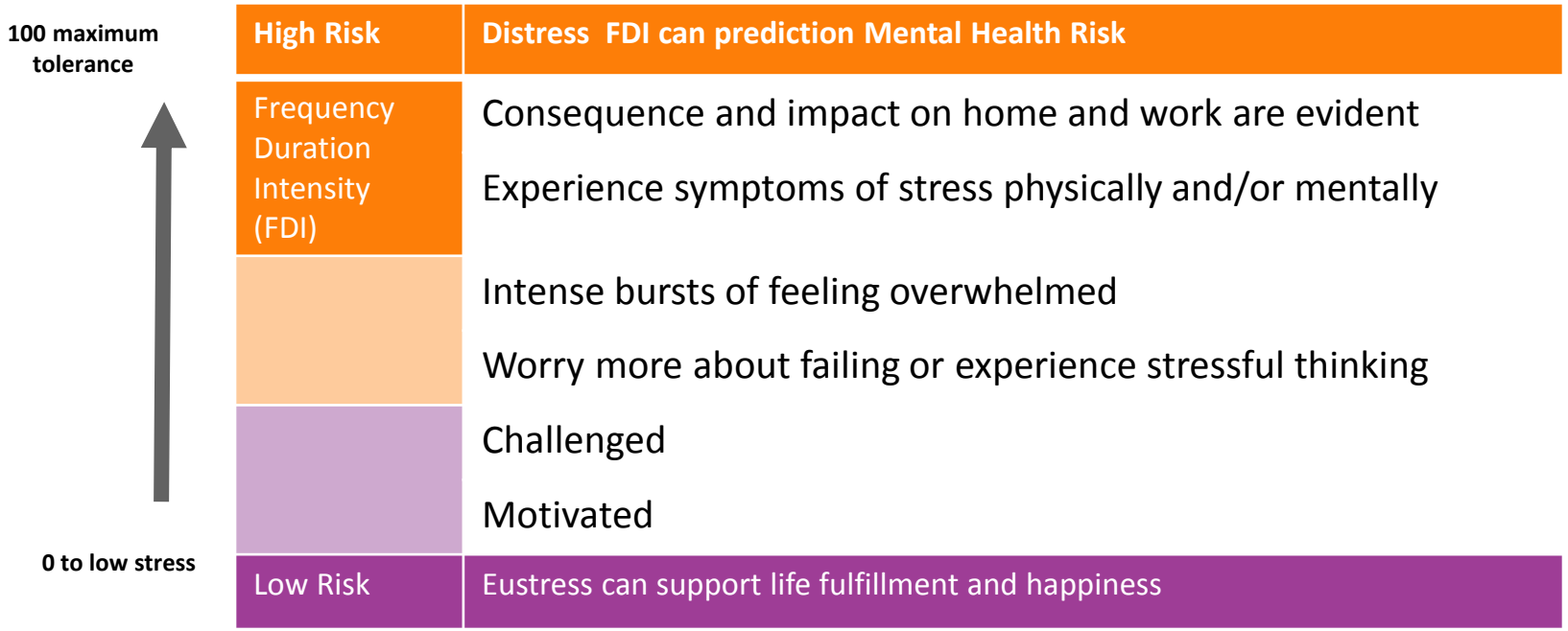
Each day,
500,000 Canadians miss work due to **mental health problems**

Stress is not all bad.

It is when it moves from eustress to distress



Daily stress load defines risk for mental health driven by psychosocial stress



External stressors impact on employees

Perceived stress load

External stressors

Impacts

Employee Performance Outcomes

- **Health**
- **Engagement**
- **Productivity**

Predicts

Organizational Results

- **Effectiveness**
- **Growth**
- **Profitability**
- **Sustainability**

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Employee's internal stress load impact

Perceived stress load

Internal stressors

Impacts

Employee Total Health Profile

- **Physical Health**
- **Mental Health**
- **Workplace Health**
- **Life Health**

Predicts

Employee Performance Outcomes

- **Health**
- **Engagement**
- **Productivity**

The link between total health, coping skills and maturing resiliency

Daily Life Forces: Work related stressors

Daily Life Forces: Personal related stressors

Total health influences an individual's resiliency with respect to their total energy reserves to resist, push forward and to get through the prevailing daily life forces

Current Energy reserves — High | Medium | Low

Cognitive Hygiene

Support pillars

Physical	Mental	Coping skills	Life
Physical activity/Motion	General mental health	Sustainability	Relationships/ social
Nutrition/Hydration	Anxiety/ Depression risk	Developmental	Financial
Sleep	Burnout risk		Work- life blending

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Early signs coping skills are being challenged through stress

Common effects of stress on your body

- Headache
- Muscle tension or pain
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Change in sex drive
- Stomach upset
- Sleep problems

Common effects of stress on your mood

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Lack of motivation or focus
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability or anger
- Sadness or depression

Common effects of stress on your behaviour

- Overeating or undereating
- Angry outbursts
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Tobacco use
- Social withdrawal
- Exercising less often

What are symptoms of mental distress

Physical

- Muscular tension/headaches
- Upset stomach
- Grinding/clenching teeth
- Difficulty sleeping/fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Cold hands and feet
- Trembling/shakiness
- Frequent colds, flu, infections
- Rapid loss or gain in weight

Emotional

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Irritability
- Depression
- Hopeless/trapped
- Out of control
- Guilty/self conscious
- Apathy
- Feeling of incompetence

Symptoms of distress, *cont'd*

Personal Well-being

- Questioning values
- Loss of purpose and meaning
- Isolating yourself from friends, family, and your community
- Loneliness
- Excessively busy

Intellectual

- Impaired judgment
- Inability to concentrate
- Easily distracted
- Memory loss
- Excessive worry
- Difficulty in making decisions/procrastination

Coping

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Exploring how to curb the slippery slope from health to mental illness

How coping skills can help in predicting outcomes

Perceived Stress Load

Environmental and Internal

Coping **skills**

LEADING INDICATOR

Health

Engagement

Productivity

LAGGING INDICATOR

Coping skills

Coping skills are the tools one has **on demand at their disposal to manage the challenges regardless of the source of stress**

1. **Internal stress -** they put on themselves
2. **External stress** - that originate from their environment.

How effectively such stressful demands are dealt with ultimately **depends on the person's skills to cope** with relationships, life and work.

A large percentage of the population has never been formally taught coping skills

How did you learn coping skills?

Coping skills support:
- problem solving
- decision making
- how to manage **life stress**

What is the impact when a person has **gaps in their ability** to cope?

Source: The True Picture of Workplace Absence, Morneau Shepell 2015

Take the first step to greater coping skills

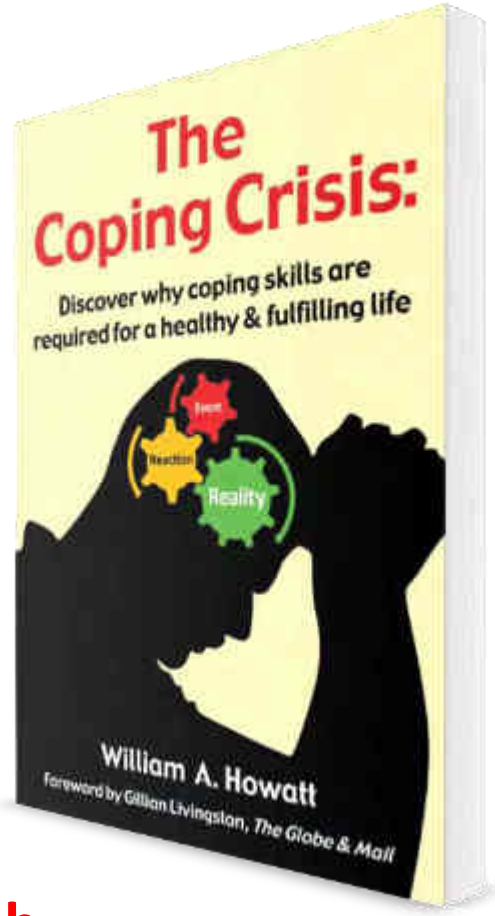
The Coping Crisis and psychosocial factors

How many Sam's are out there today who are not aware of how their micro decisions and choices are shaping their health?

Information does not equal results.
For example, what's one key to losing weight?

What percent of people struggling with their weight know this success formula key?

What is one potential roadblock?



Available in French

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The Case of Sam

Sam is struggling to cope with **job stress** in his current role and work demands. He thinks he is trapped with no options.

He drastically increased his body fat. At age 39 he was put on **hypertension medication**.

At age 43 he was put on medication for **clinical depression**.

He developed the habit of **over-eating at night** to feel better (e.g., chips, ice cream, pop, and fast foods).

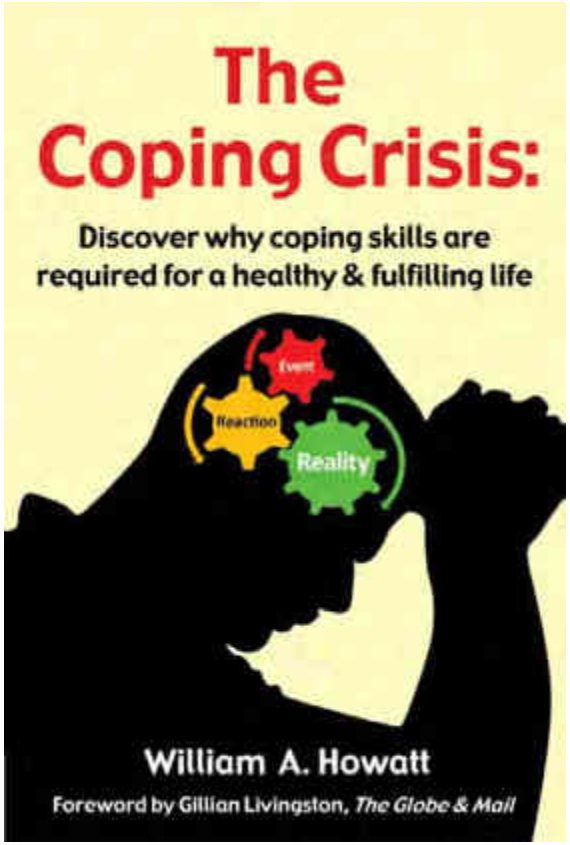
His lifestyle choice after work was dominated by watching TV at night and snacking. He has **no structured pro-health habit** (e.g., exercise, hobbies or outlets).

This unhealthy coping between age 34 and 39 put **60 pounds** on his 5'8" body frame over a period of 30 months.

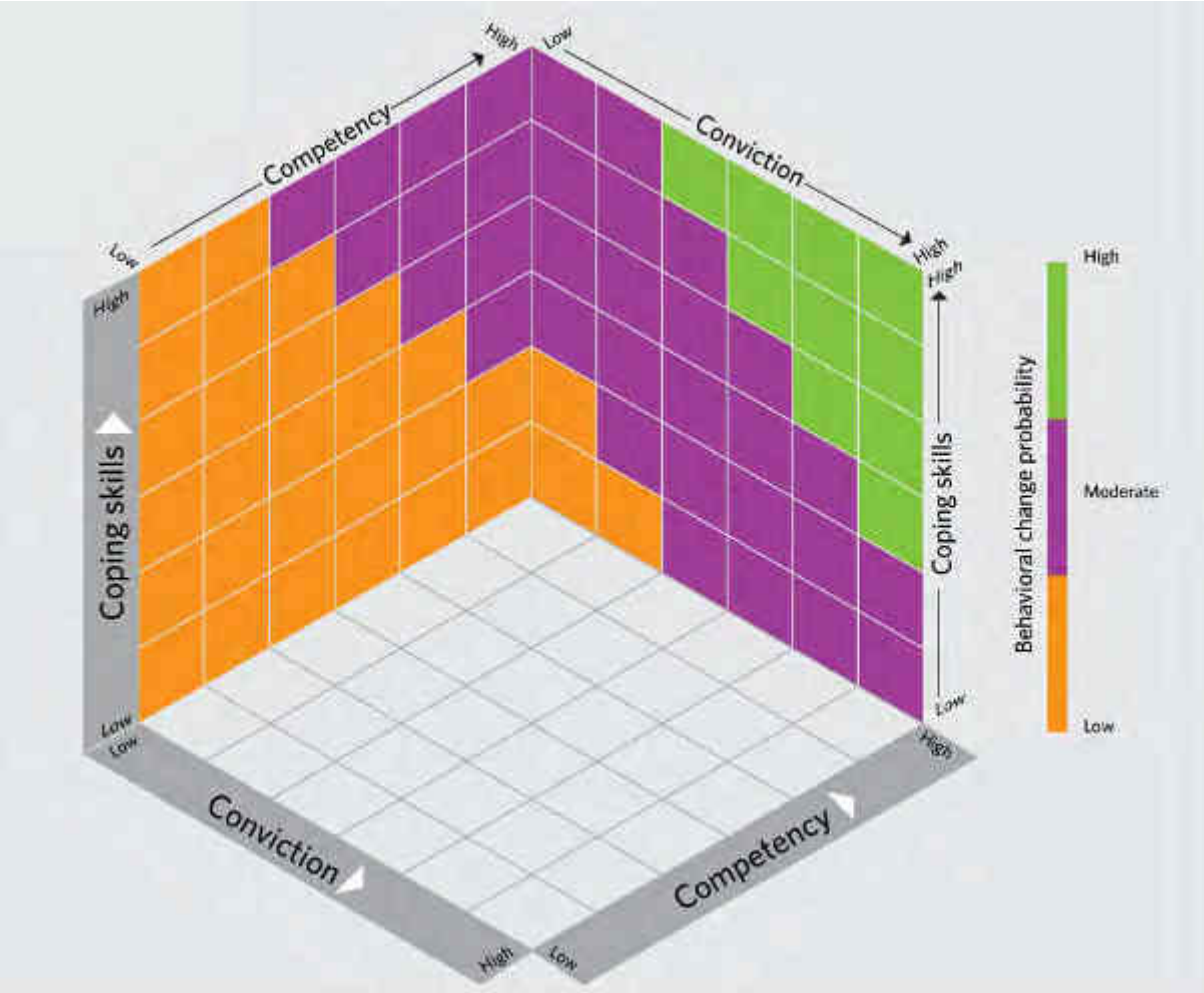
At 42 he became a **Type 1 diabetic (late onset)**.

Supporting employees to evolve their coping skills

Prevention – requires action, patience, time and persistence



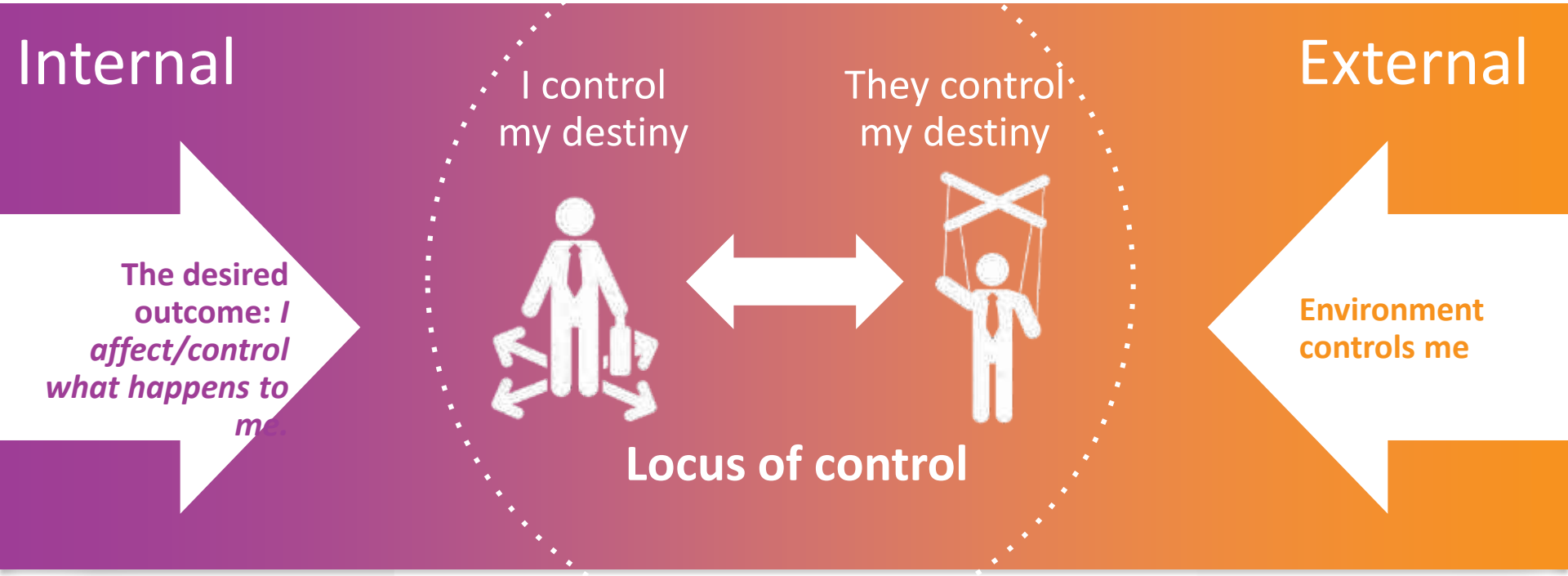
Howatt's PBC^3



Coping micro skills

Developmental

Taking charge: Locus of control



Learning how to take charge of what is within your control

Who is in charge of your future?

External Locus of control – outcomes of life are outside one's control		
High	Moderate	Low

I have little control over what happens. My life circumstances are determined as much by luck as anything else.

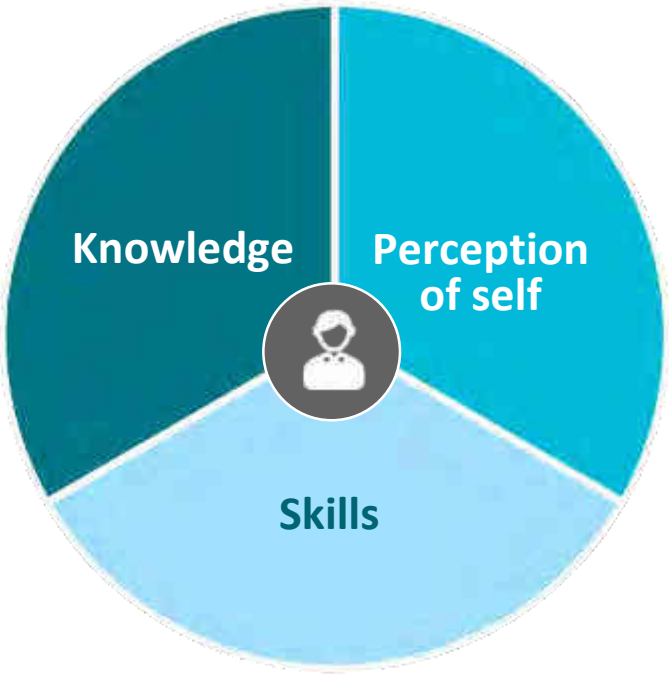
Internal Locus of control – outcomes of life are inside one's control		
High	Moderate	Low

I believe I am in charge of my future. The decisions are choices I make daily will define my life path.

What end would you put your arrow that best represents where you fit and why?

How did you learn this?

How confident are you in each of the work and life skills below?



Self-competencies

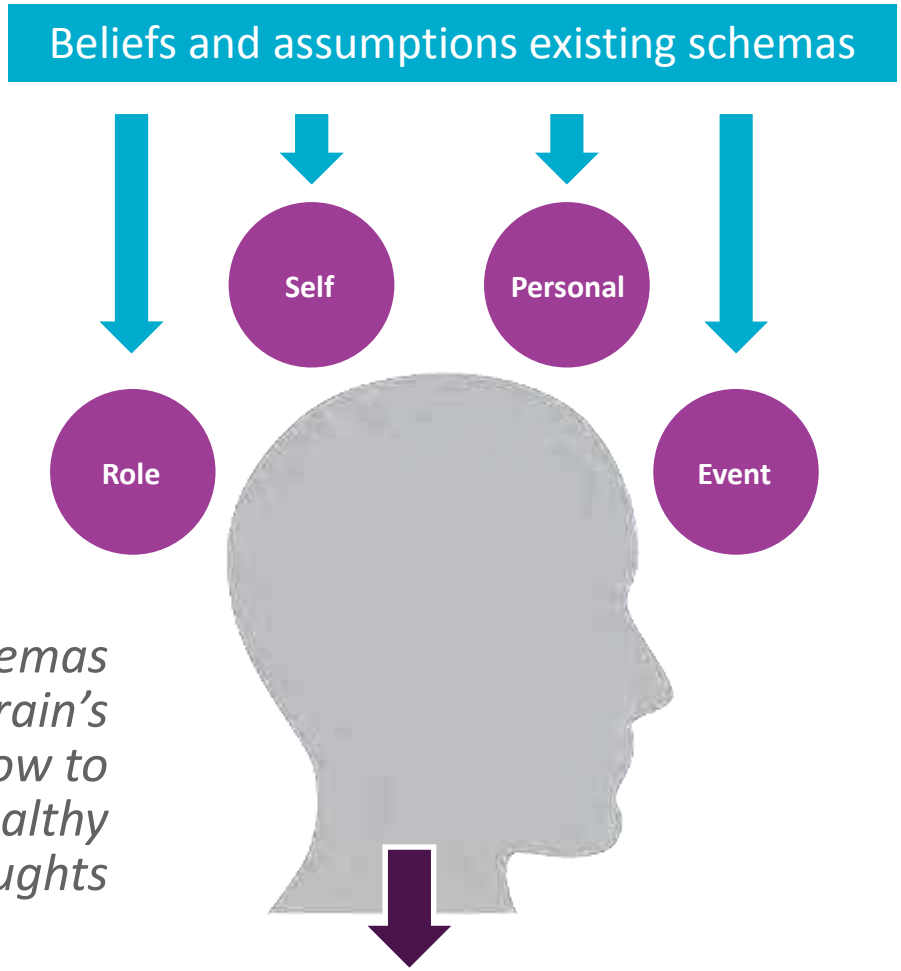
- Job skills
- Life skills
- Relationship skills
- Financial skills
- Intimacy skills
- Parenting skills
- Coping skills

A. Self-efficacy		
L	M	H

B. Self-competency		
L	M	H

C. Self-esteem		
L	M	H

Cognitive schemas impact your beliefs and assumptions



Cognitive schemas are the brain's insights on how to stop unhealthy thoughts

What is resiliency?

The ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens

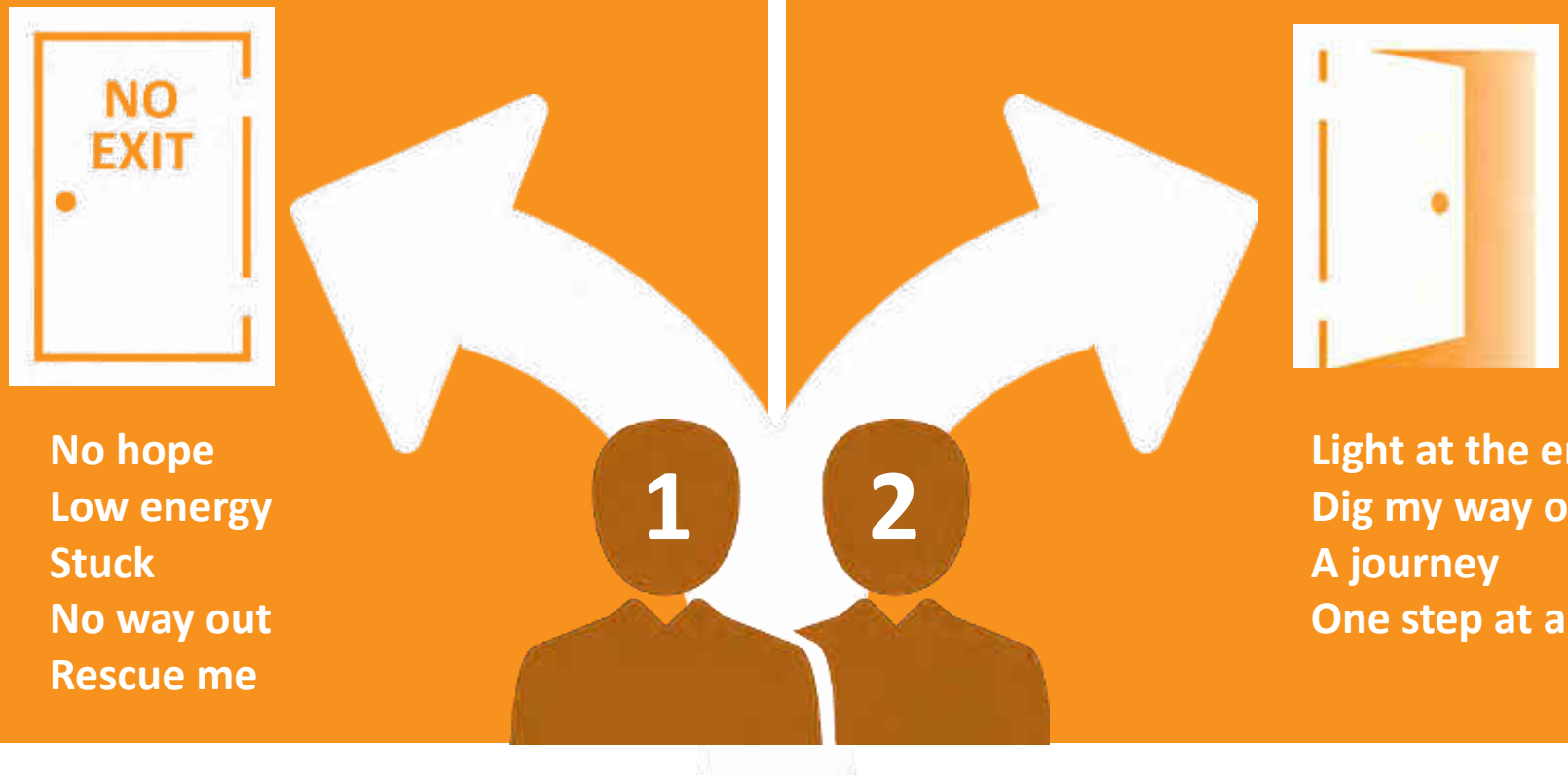
The ability to recover readily from illness, depression, adversity or the like; buoyancy

www.dictionary.com

The ability of something to return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed, bent, etc.

Merriam Webster

Stress trapped: resiliency is ultimately the ability to see the light and take action



No hope
Low energy
Stuck
No way out
Rescue me

Light at the end
Dig my way out
A journey
One step at a time

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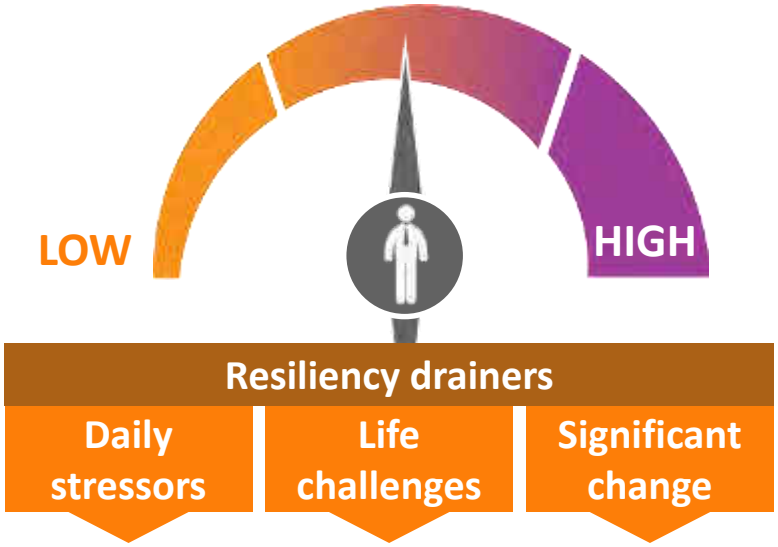
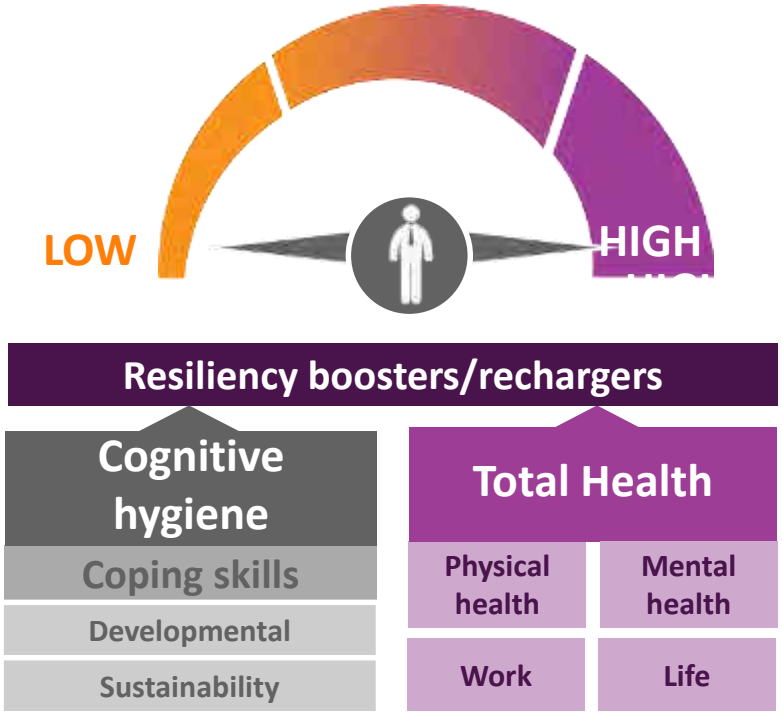
Understanding the resiliency engine

Resiliency is a by-product of an individual's ability to manage/weather day to-day stressors by employing their coping skills. These coping skills are impacted by their on going mental, health which is in turn supported by their physical health as well as their current work and life situations.





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Coping micro skills

Sustainability

Do you know the purpose behind your work?

It's up to each of us to define our purpose. What you're doing today may not be what you want to be doing in 10 years, but it may be a necessary step. Purpose is powerful medicine for living a fulfilling and meaningful life.

By pausing a moment each day to consider "why" you are doing your current job, you can develop your career purpose.

Gratitude

Practicing daily gratitude can help a person shift their focus from complaining about what they don't have or think they deserve to what they know they have that is positive and a benefit to them.

Sustainability coping micro skills for employees

Such as:

- How to clean out your negative thoughts
- Learn to calm your stressed mind with visualization
- How to boost your confidence at work with good thoughts

http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/workplace-award/

Different triggers that indicate when coping skills training can be helpful

Attendance issues

Performance managing intrapersonal skills

THI Coping skills score less than 65%

Discipline issues around self management (e.g. anger, acting out when under pressure)

WCB (e.g. PTSD, chronic pain)

Self evaluation of need and motivated to develop intrapersonal skills (coping skills is a cognitive based developmental skill)

STD/LTD (e.g. mental health)

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Pathway to coping
online course

UNB EST. 1785 UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK | College of Extended Learning

Benefits of the course to employers:

- Provides a supportive social environment encouraging employees to seek help
- Creates an engaged workforce that is motivated to succeed
- Reduces absenteeism and turnover rates
- Builds positive employee/employer relationships where employees want to come to work
- Enhances both the psychological and physical health of your employees, which will lead to higher employee job satisfaction and increased productivity

Benefits of the course to individuals:

- Develop new, more adaptive ways of coping
- Find peace
- Get ahead personally and professionally
- Improve relationships

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You've worked hard to build a healthy workplace
Get recognized for it!

- Created by Morneau Shepell and The Globe and Mail
- Gives organizations a unique perspective on the total health of their workplace: **physical, mental, work and life** and their impact on engagement and productivity

When you participate, you will receive:

- Survey for your employees: each employee receives an individual report
- An aggregated report for your organization
- Actionable insights into improving the total health of your employees
- Opportunity to win an Employee Recommended Workplace Award

www.employeerecommended.com

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Thank you, and please let us know if we can help

MORNEAU SHEPELL
MENTAL HEALTH PARTNER

Dr. Bill Howatt
Chief Research & Development Officer, Workforce Productivity
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Questions

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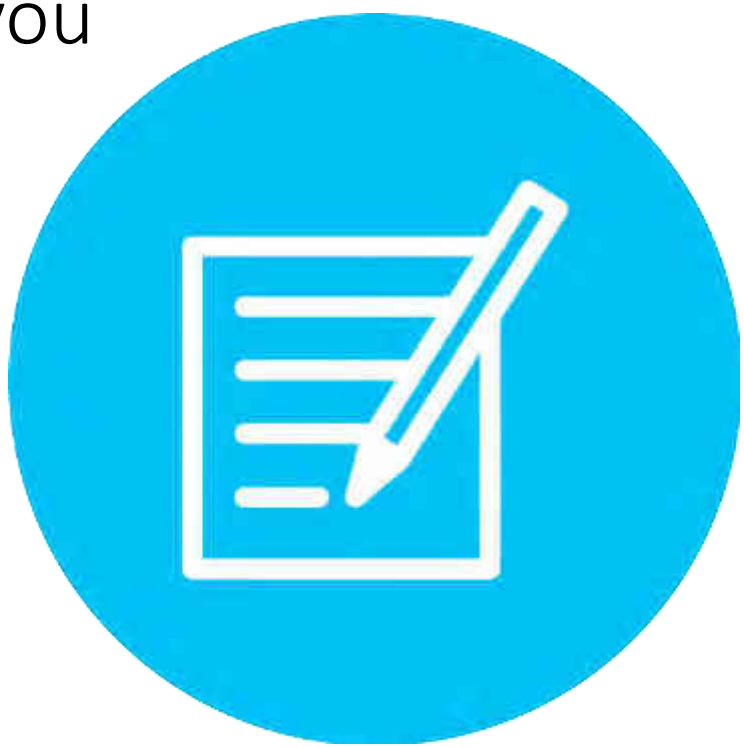
How did we do?

Please take a moment to complete the survey that will pop up on your screen after you leave the webinar.

We greatly appreciate your feedback!



Thank you

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